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ABSTRACT

For parents of young children, this packet offers ideas of things to do at home to help in the development of children's reading and writing. The packet discusses how children learn and how parents can help; shows the stages a child goes through in learning to write; offers ideas for activities parents and children can do together; explains how the activities help children to read and write; tells how parents can "child-watch"; shows parents how to keep a record of their children's progress; and lists children's book clubs, books about young children's learning, early picture books, and nursery rhyme collections. (RS)

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Read and write together

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Read and write together

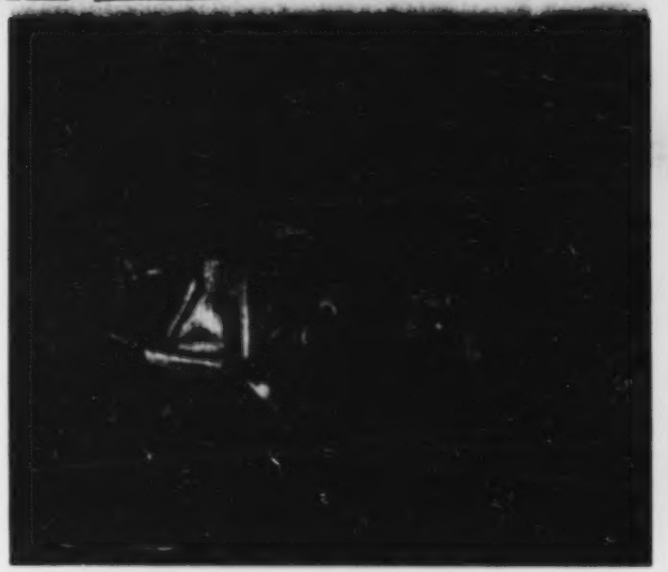
An activity pack for parents and children

Introduction

Children find out the first – and perhaps the most important – things about reading and writing with you at home. They see you read and write, start to recognise shapes, begin to draw and scribble and get to know the words that appear regularly on television or in the newspaper.

Of course, it's easy to leave reading and writing until children start school. However, there are many ways in which you can help your children with reading and writing long before they start school, ways that can be built on by the school and will help your children become confident readers and writers.

The *Read and Write Together* pack is for parents and young children. It will give you some ideas of things to do at home to help in the development of your children's reading and writing. It also describes the stages children go through as they learn to read and write. We have also tried to answer some common questions parents ask about how they can help their children, and make sure what they do fits in with how they will be taught at school.



I hope that you find the *Read and Write Together* pack helpful.

Alan Wells
Director,
The Basic
Skills
Agency

How to use this pack

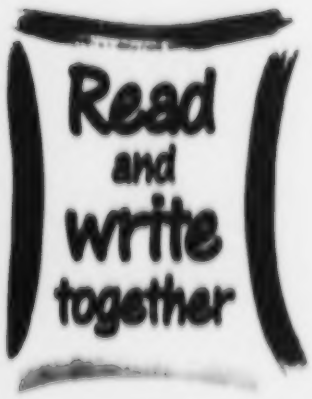
This pack will:

- tell you more about how your child learns and how you can help
- show you the stages a child goes through in learning to write
- give you ideas for activities to do together
- explain how the activities help your child to read and write
- tell you how to 'child-watch'
- show you how to keep a record of your child's progress
- give you a list of useful names and addresses.

Note: Sometimes we have used 'she/her' and sometimes 'he/him'.

Some important messages!

- YOU are his first teacher. Let him see YOU reading and writing.
- It doesn't matter if you think you're no good. You can still help by showing him what readers and writers do.
- Reading and writing can be fun: enjoy them together.
- Helping her doesn't have to cost much money. Your time is much more important.
- Listen and watch to find out what she needs to do next . . .



Writing at home

How can I help my child?

Let her watch you when you write. It might be :

- filling in forms
- letters
- birthday cards
- notes
- bills
- shopping lists.

Talk about what you are writing, and who it's for.

Show him that you can make mistakes and start again.

Children like making their own 'pretend' lists.

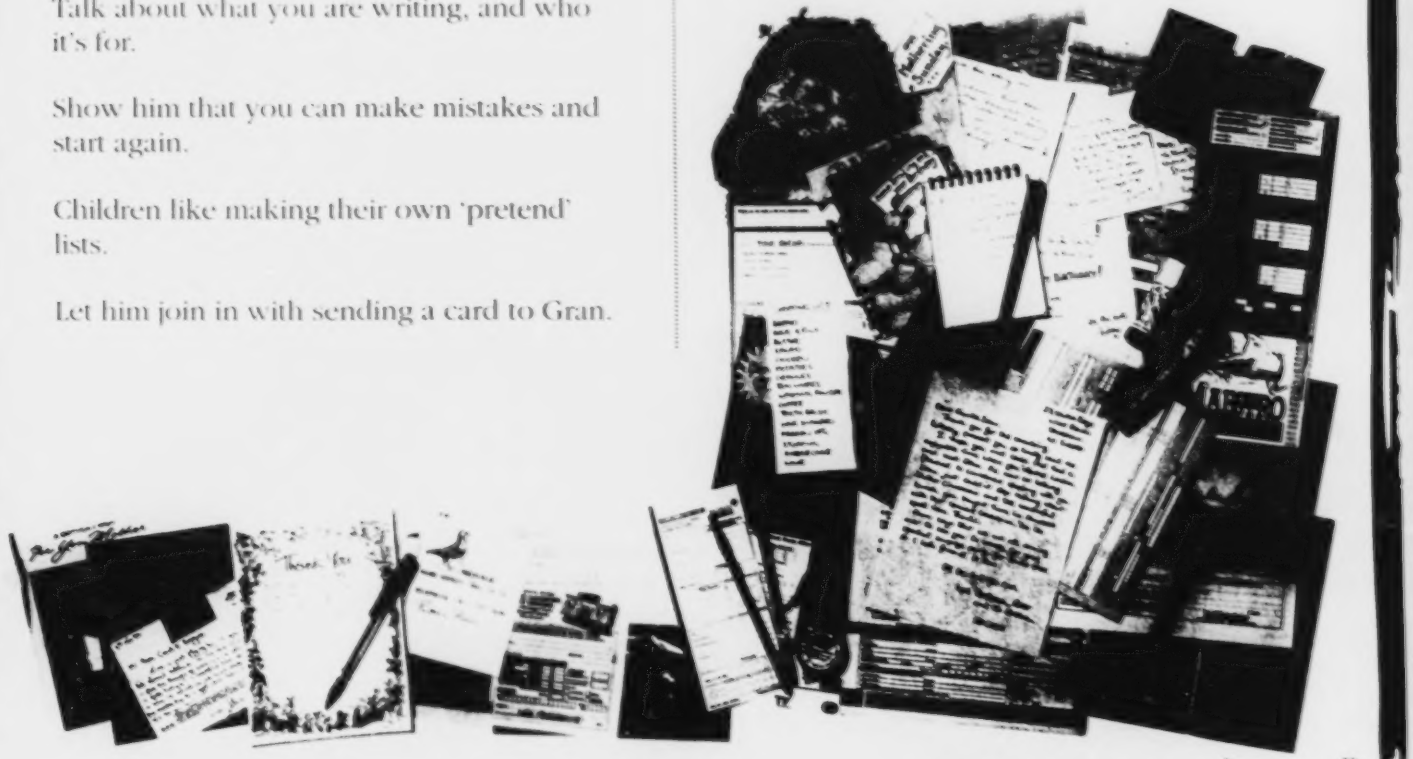
Let him join in with sending a card to Gran.

Why do talking and reading help children to write?

Talking can help children to sort out ideas they want to write.

Listening or reading stories can help them to write their own stories.

Telling stories can help them too.



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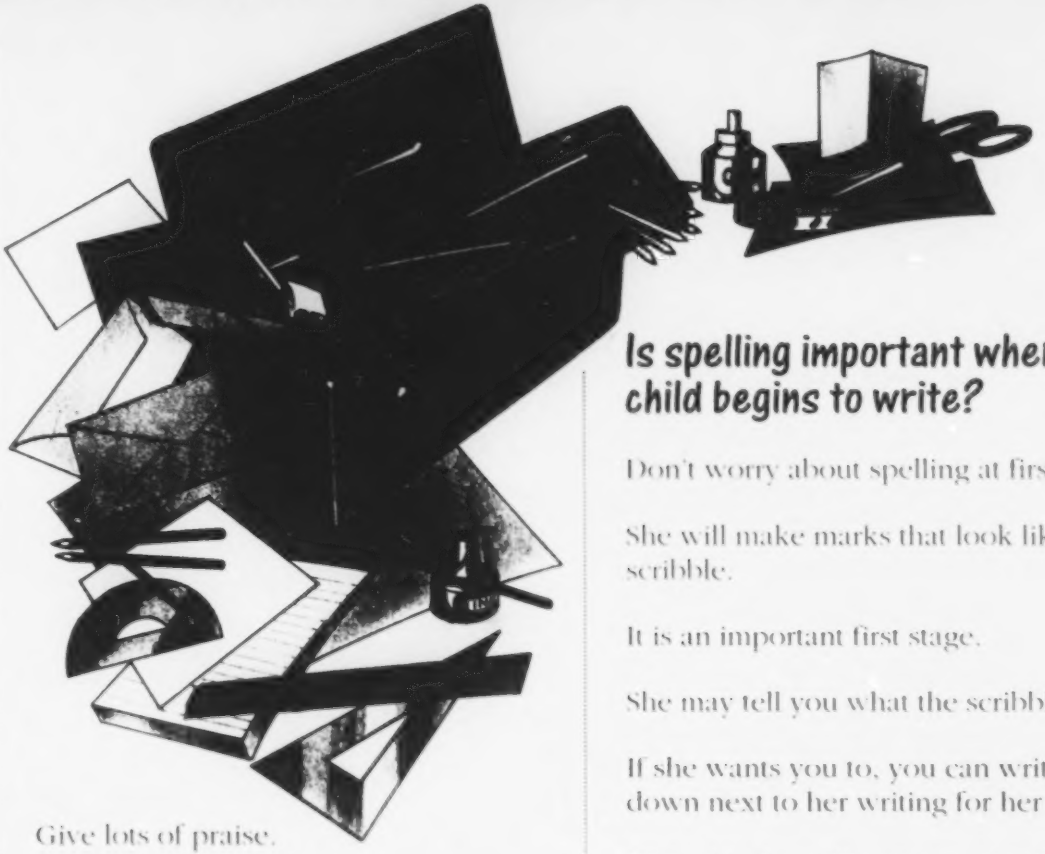
What materials will I need?

- Lots of paper – plain, lined, coloured. Scrap paper will do, like the back of old letters.
- Different pens, pencils, crayons, to try out.
- Scissors, glue, sellotape if possible.
- Old envelopes and greetings cards for children to copy if they want to.
- Blank forms for 'pretend' writing (you can get them from the post office, or use the ones in mail-order catalogues).
- Used stamps for sticking on letters.
- Little blank books (just a few pages folded over or stapled together) for children to make their own 'stories'.
- A plastic 'tool box' or shoe box to keep it all in!



Give lots of praise.

Pin her writing on the wall, even if it only looks like a scribble.

Help if he asks you, **but never force him to copy your writing**. It won't help him to learn any faster.

Is spelling important when my child begins to write?

Don't worry about spelling at first.

She will make marks that look like scribble.

It is an important first stage.

She may tell you what the scribble says.

If she wants you to, you can write it down next to her writing for her to see.

Bit by bit she will start to write shapes that look more like letters.

Often they are like the letters in her name.

Then you may see letters that make the same sound as the word she wants to write. (B for be, or W for went).

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All this takes a long time!

So don't worry if he wants to do lots of 'scribbling'.

Much later on, when he is writing a lot, correct spelling will help other people to read his writing.

You can help by:

- looking at words together
- finding patterns in them (all the words that end in 'ing' or 'ight')
- finding words inside other words ('car' and 'pet' in carpet, 'pot' in Spot).

Games like these will help her to notice the way words are spelt.

But if you correct her spelling too much, she will give up.

It's much more important to help her to 'have a go', and look up the spelling afterwards.

Does it matter if my child uses capital letters?

There are capital letters all around us, on shops, on notices, in newspapers.

She will see them and will start to copy them.

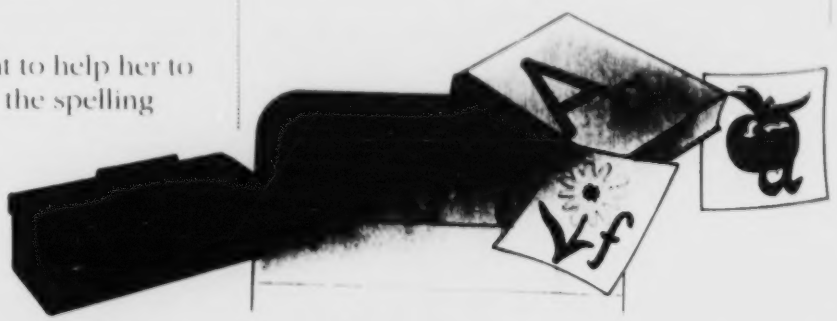
Don't worry if they are all mixed up at first.

Bit by bit she will sort them out.

You can look at an alphabet together, and find the 'big and little letters'.

Better still, make an alphabet book together.

He will enjoy finding pictures and letters to stick in on the right pages.



What if my child doesn't make the letter shapes properly?

If he writes for you, first of all, talk about what he wants to say.
The message is more important than the letter shapes or the spelling.

Don't put him off by telling him it's wrong.

But you can help him with handwriting by drawing patterns together.

Writing letter shapes needs a lot of control.

She can practise by drawing 'tiles on the roof' or 'waves on the sea'.

Draw your own pictures instead of buying books.

She will learn by watching you draw.

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Reading at home

Read and write together

What can I do to help my child learn to read?

- Let him see you reading.
- Share books together.
- Books are important but they are not the only way of learning to read – read things like mugs and T-shirts and words on TV.
- Point out the print that is all around us. Look at street signs, supermarket labels, posters. Find the letters that are in her name.
- Write things for her. Make scrapbooks from photos or old magazines. Show her what you've written on your shopping list. Write notes to her.
- Show her how to find things out by reading. Look for the names of TV programmes in the paper. Look at a recipe together when you are cooking.

How do I share books with my child?

Even babies can enjoy playing with books. They won't tear them up if you show them how to hold them.

You and he choose the book together.

Before you begin to read, get a 'feel' for the book by looking at the cover and talking about it.

Let him hold the book and turn the pages.

Look together at the pictures. Look for little details. They help her understand what the book is about.

Read the same book again and again if you both enjoy it. This helps her to remember the story. It helps her to recognise some of the words.

Let her 'read' the book to you by talking about each picture.

Read story books and information books.

Read books with catchy words or rhymes. She will enjoy joining in.

Read books with exciting stories. He will want to find out what happens next.

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Should I ask my child questions about the book?

Questions can help him to think about a book, *but don't overdo it.*

Reading isn't a test.

You might ask :

- (Looking at the cover) What do you think this story is going to be about?
- What do you think is going to happen next?
- Have we read any other stories like this one?
- (About a character in the story) How do you think she's feeling?
- Which is your favourite page?

Let her ask questions too. Don't do all the talking!

When is the best time to read with my child?

There is no set time of day for reading.

It goes on all the time, anywhere.

But it is important for you to find quiet moments together for sharing books.

Choose a time when you are not feeling rushed.

Choose a time when there aren't other things he is wanting to do.

Give lots of praise.

Don't nag. If you're not both enjoying it, stop.

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Thinking about what your child knows

Read and write together

Children know a lot before they ever go to school.

What does my child know already about reading?

She may know:

- which way up to hold a book
- how to turn the pages
- some of the labels of favourite foods in the supermarket

- some of the names of TV programmes
- some road or shop signs
- some letters in his or her name
- that you can find things out from a book.

What does my child know about stories?

She may know:

- how to tell her own story
- how to retell a story you've told her
- what story books she likes
- that some stories are 'happy ever after' stories and some stories are sad
- what might happen next in a story you're reading.

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What does your child know about writing?

He may know:

- that talk can be written down
- that you can send messages to people
- that you can write things down to help you remember them
- that writing goes from left to right
- that letters stand for different sounds
- that the same letters come in different words ("look, that's like in my name").

Some parents keep a diary to note down all the things their child is learning:

- their talk
- their reading
- their writing.

You could keep a list of:

- the books she likes or dislikes
- her questions
- the songs and rhymes she knows.

You could fill in a 'literacy honeycomb' for her.

You could tape record some of your shared reading. He will enjoy listening and later on it will bring back happy memories.

It may help you to think about how you learned when you were a child. Can you remember learning to read? Do you remember any of the books? What did you like? What did you find hard?

Think about how much writing or reading you do now. Does he see you reading or writing?

What kind of reading and writing do you like, or dislike?

The most important things we can do to help our children are:

- watch and listen to find out how much they know already
- praise them
- let them try things out, don't keep telling them it's wrong
- let them see us reading and writing
- let them join in with us
- let them choose books or paper and pens.

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Reading & Writing at School

Read and write together

How do teachers teach reading?

There is a lot of talk in the press and on TV about the best ways to teach reading. People have always argued about it.

Most schools use a mixture of different methods. Sometimes reading schemes are based on one or more methods.

The main ways you might hear about are:

Look and Say or Whole Word

Children learn to recognise words on flash cards and to say what the word is.

It is useful for children to know some words by heart.

But
A word is much harder to remember all by itself instead of in a story or a sentence . . .

Phonics

Children are taught to 'sound out' letters or groups of letters.

It is useful for children to know the different sounds of letters. It helps them to have a go at reading a new word and it helps them to write on their own.

But
The English language doesn't have simple phonic rules. Try reading 'cough' by sounding it out..

Real books

Children learn to read by sharing stories with their teachers.

The teacher points out letters and words and talks about the book with the child.

'Real books' means ordinary picture books, not books from a reading scheme. It is important for children to enjoy exciting stories and to choose their own books.

But
Sometimes children don't pay enough attention to the separate words and letters.

Language Experience

Children learn to read by being helped to write about their own experience. Then the teacher makes books for the child to read.

But
Sometimes children want to read about things beyond their own experience...

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What method is best for my child? How will I know?

There is no single way to teach reading.

Different children may need different methods.

Right from the start of school, your child should carry on enjoying books.

Whether her school uses a reading scheme or not, the teachers should also be sharing other books with the children. They will use story books and information books. Some children love to read books with lots of facts in.

They will probably be playing lots of games that help with reading.

They will be teaching sounds and songs and rhymes.

There will be labels and notices around the classroom.

How can I help the teacher?

Remember that you know a lot about your child and can help the teacher by working together. The school needs you.

If you're worried about anything or if your child doesn't seem to be enjoying reading and writing, talk with the teacher to find the best way forward together.

The teachers should be able to tell you clearly what they are doing and how you can help. They should ask you about what he enjoys doing at home.

He may be given a book bag with a home/school card for you to fill in as well as the teacher.

The record card may tell you how to read together, what to do if he gets stuck, and how long to read together.

Your child might bring home a word tin at first. Learning words by themselves is hard. Make them into funny sentences to help her remember.

The school may have meetings about reading. If not, ask...

The teacher should be keeping careful records of how your child is getting on. You and your child can make notes together about reading at home.

What if my friend's child is on a harder book?

If the school has a reading scheme, don't worry about what book your child is on. It isn't a race.

What is much more important is making sure she enjoys reading and can talk about the story.

If she brings the same book back again and again, this doesn't matter.

It will help her to read it over and over, even if you're sick of it. Remember how children practise over and over when they are learning to walk.

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What if my child doesn't want to read to me?

Don't force him. You won't get anywhere if he isn't enjoying it. Try reading to him.

Maybe he is worried about getting it wrong.

Maybe he can tell that you are worried.

Talk to the teacher. Is he enjoying reading at school?

How do teachers teach writing?

Teaching writing has changed in some schools.

Children have a go on their own.

They make up their own spellings by working out the sounds in the words they want.

They remember some words from their reading books.

They find other words around the classroom.

They may have a word book or a 'try pad'.

The teachers may not correct all the spellings. Children can't learn them all at once.

The teachers think of real reasons for the children to write. They might write letters or make their own story books. They will write lists and notices. In the play corner there may be message pads by a toy telephone. There may be forms they can pretend to fill in or labels for a shop.

Sometimes the teacher will write for the children at first so that they can do more than they could manage on their own.

Will my child be taught how to write letter shapes properly?

Yes. The children will have lots of handwriting practice. They will probably start with patterns.

The teachers will tell you what kind of handwriting they are teaching so that you can help at home.

Will my child be taught how to spell properly?

Yes, but at first it is more important to make sure the children are enjoying writing. They will probably be playing spelling games at other times.

Later on they may bring words home to learn. It is best if these words are words they are using in their own writing. If your child finds it hard to learn them, maybe it's because they don't mean much.

Talk to the teacher. Perhaps your child could make her own list.

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What about full stops and capital letters?

Your child's teacher will show her how these work when she is writing for the children. She will point out full stops and capital letters in reading books sometimes, maybe at the end of the story.

You can help by doing the same at home. Bit by bit your child will get the hang of how they work and will start using them in her own writing. She may notice !!! and ???? because of the interesting shape. Tell her what they're for and show her how to use them in her own writing.

If your child brings some writing home:

Don't

- say how untidy it is
- point out the spelling mistakes
- tell her she's forgotten the full stops and capital letters
- put it in the bin.

Do

- talk about what the writing says
- ask your child what was difficult or easy
- ask your child how she got the idea for writing it
- ask what she'd like to do with the writing now – make a best copy? Put it up on the wall? Show anyone else? If she's really pleased with it, and if you or anyone else has a typewriter maybe she'd like a printed copy.
- Then **maybe** help her with full stops . . . or a useful spelling . . . or a letter shape.

Remember that your child learned to walk and talk before she started school.

Remember that you are your child's first teacher.

Remember that teachers and parents and children need to work together.

And remember to keep on having fun . . .

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Learning Together

Read and write together

Child-watching

One of the most important things you can do to help your child is to **watch** her. She probably knows a lot about reading and writing already. She will be learning more every day by noticing the things you do and copying you. She will be learning things from the print that is all around us. Watch what she does and says. Build on what she knows already. To help you keep a record, try building the literacy 'honey comb'.

Each cell in the honey comb describes a skill your child will learn to do. Bit by bit she will get the hang of what talking, reading and writing are all about.

When you notice that she can do one of the skills, colour in the cell and start building.

The honey comb won't start at the bottom and go up. Children's learning isn't like that.

All children do go through the same stages but not always in the same order.

Don't try and force her and **don't** use the honey comb as a kind of test. It will put her off.

Don't worry if her literacy honey comb grows more slowly than someone else's.

Every child is different.

If your child is taking a long time to get hooked on books, he is probably busy learning other things.

Make sure he sees you enjoying books and writing, even if you don't think you're good at it.

Make sure that he knows what reading is for.

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Making Lists and Writing Letters

Read and write together

Why?

Making lists with your child shows him that writing is useful. It helps you to remember things.

It shows him that sometimes writing can be just a few words, not long sentences. It can be on a scrap of paper, not just in a book.

Writing messages with him shows that writing can 'speak' to someone when you are not there.

Maybe your child has seen you getting a letter. Children soon realise that letters are important. They can bring good news or bad news. They can make people who are far away seem close to us.

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What next? More ideas for lists, messages and letters

- **Likes and Hates Lists:** This is really just for fun, but if the likes and hates are foods, you could pin it up in the kitchen to remind the cook.
- **People We Know List:** This list could be for sending cards, or inviting to a birthday party, or for making an address book.
- **Things to Take List:** Let him help you to make a list of what to pack for a holiday, or for a day out, or for a trip to the park with a picnic. If you or your child draw little pictures for each thing, he will be able to 'read' the list to you and help you pack.
- **Messages to Each Other:** Leave a message on her pillow – it might just say "Goodnight"! Or write a message about breakfast : "The cornflakes are in the cupboard". Or a message in the bathroom: "Please brush your teeth".

- Letters: To grans, nans, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends asking them to come to tea, from Nursery Rhyme or story book characters, to Father Christmas, for Free Offers.

- Making Envelopes: Take a square piece of paper. Fold each corner into the middle.Stick three sides together with a dab of glue in the centre. Leave the fourth side open for the letter.

- Talking About Letters: Watch and talk to your child to find out what she knows about letters. Does she know how letters begin and end? Does she know that letters need envelopes? Can she fold the letter to get it in? Does she know how to close and stick the envelope? Does she know about writing addresses? Stamps and where they go? Does she know what will happen to the letter after it has been posted?

Making Lists and Writing Letters

You will need:

- Scrap paper
- Writing paper
- Pen or pencil
- Envelopes
- Used stamps
- Glue

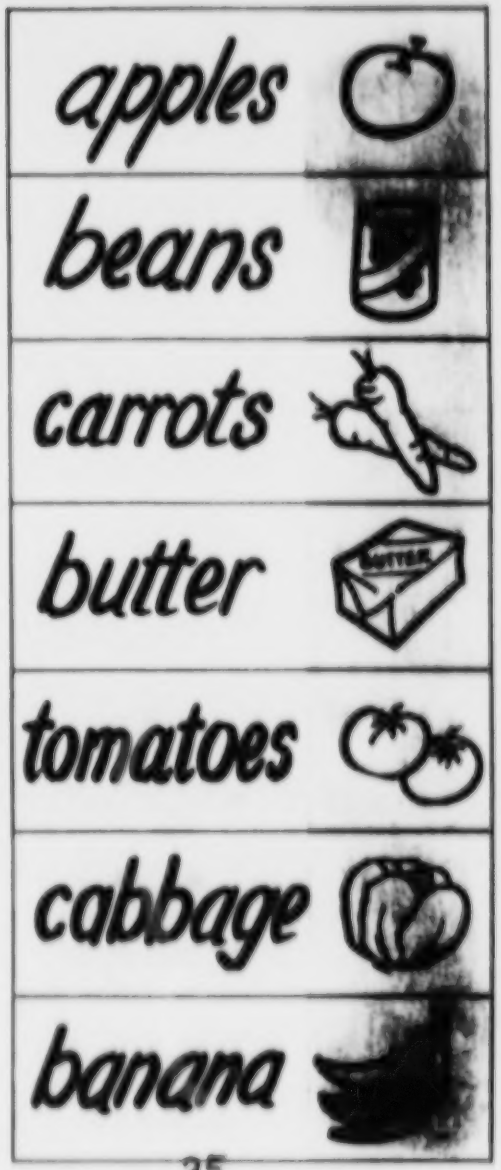
Shopping List

Ask him to help you make a shopping list. Draw a simple picture of each item next to the word so that he can 'read' the list. In the shop let him tell you what to look for next.

Don't Forget Lists

Talk to him about all the things you have to do together today. Lists can help you to remember. As you both think of things, let him watch you writing.

You could help him to make a **don't forget** notice for the wall. Decorate it with handwriting patterns!



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A Letter from a Toy or a Pet

Write a letter to your child along the lines of the one below - from a pet or a toy. Put it in an envelope addressed to your child. Stick on a used stamp, and deliver it with the mail!

Dipta
3 Park Road
Bradford

The Toy Cupboard
3 Park Road
Bradford.

10th November 1995

Dear Dipta,

I hope you are well. I am writing to tell you that I am lonely in the cupboard. It's dark in here and I get lonely. It's cold too. I have got the flu.

Do you think you could ask your mum to help you write a letter to me and tell me all your news? Or could you make me a Get Well card? I am sorry this is a short letter but I am not good at writing.

Love from
Ted

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Board Games and Card Games

Read and write together

Why?

Board games and card games will help your child to match pictures and words. This is an important reading skill. Games make it fun.

Board games can help her begin to understand maps and plans.

The games will also help her with numbers.

Learning to take turns is useful too.

What Next?

- Make Snap cards from the letters of the alphabet and matching pictures beginning with each letter.
- Play Lotto with the letters and pictures. Give each player a pile of picture cards. Turn up the letter cards one by one. If you have a picture beginning with that letter, you keep the card and cover the picture with it. The winner is the first person to cover all their pictures.
- Collect differently shaped letters from newspaper headlines, catalogues and magazines. Cut out capitals and small letters. She will enjoy sorting these as well as playing Snap with them.
- As she learns to read, make Snap and Lotto cards out of the words she knows. Match them to pictures.
- Make a board game based on your neighbourhood. Draw a simple map with roads and houses. Help him to find where you live, where the shop is, etc.
- Make a Spot the Difference game. Use wall paper with a repeating design. Or use some old wrapping paper. Change one picture. See if he can spot the difference.
- Play Spot the difference with letters of the alphabet.

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Supermarket Game

You will need:

- Cardboard from old cereal box
- Glue or paste
- Felt pens
- Scissors
- A used match or a tooth pick

1. Stick the sheet on to the cardboard.
2. When it's dry, cut out the game and press it under something heavy to keep it flat.
3. Cut out the spinner. Make a hole in the middle and push the match through.
4. Cut out the two counters, or use buttons or pennies.
5. Show her how to take turns with the spinner and to count the squares.
6. You could make the game more difficult. If you land on meat, for example, think of something you would buy there. Miss a turn if you can't. Have another go if you can.

Cereal Box Snap

You will need :

- Several sets of empty 'individual ' cereal boxes
- Scissors
- A large envelope

1. Cut out the front of each box with the name and picture to make playing cards.
2. Keep the cards together in the envelope.
3. Use them to play Snap with your child.
4. You can make the game harder by cutting out the name only . See if she can match the words without the pictures.
5. Use the cards for other matching games. For Pelmanism, turn all the cards upside down. Each player turns two cards over. If they match, you keep them. If they don't match, you turn them back. This is a good memory test.

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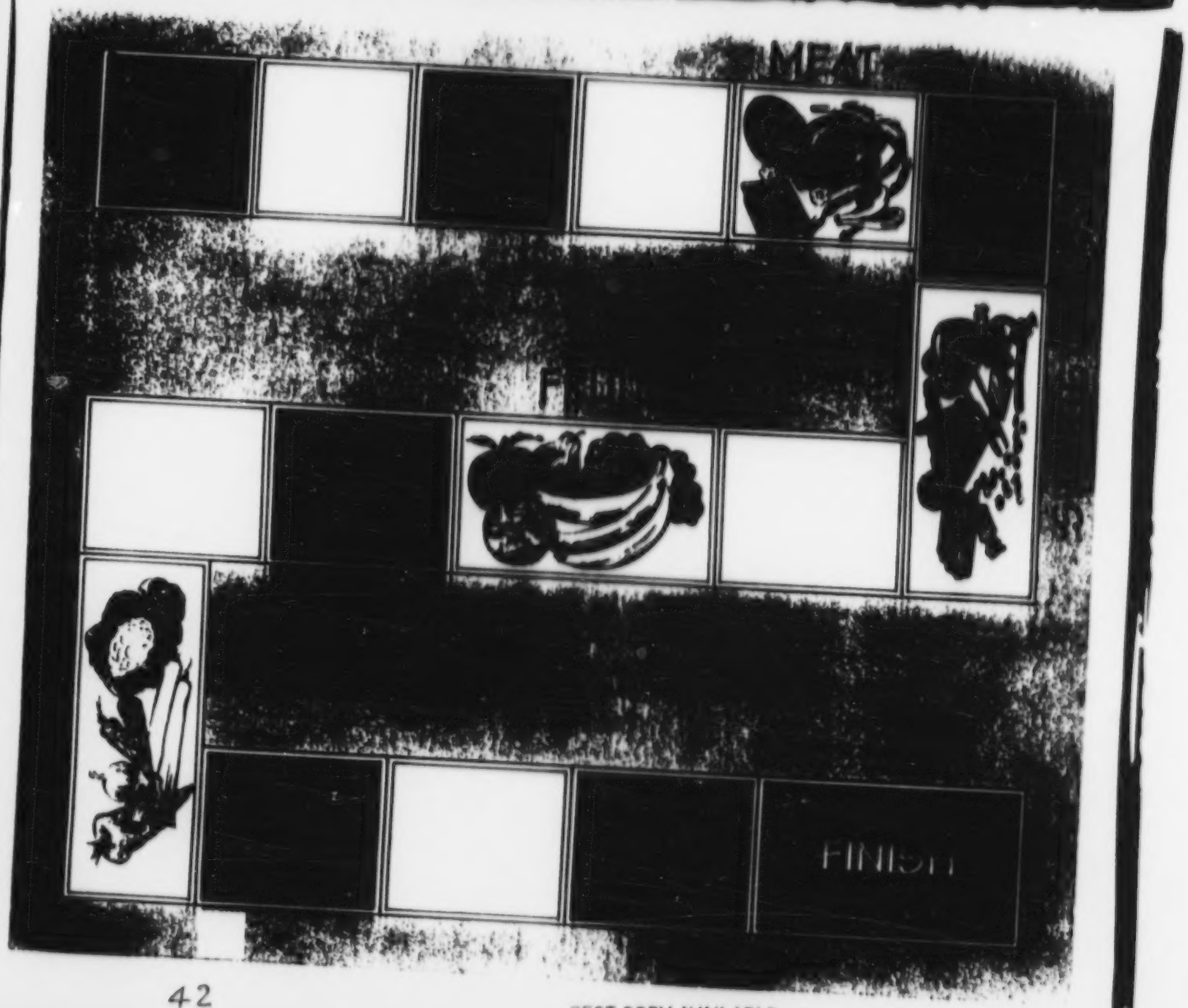

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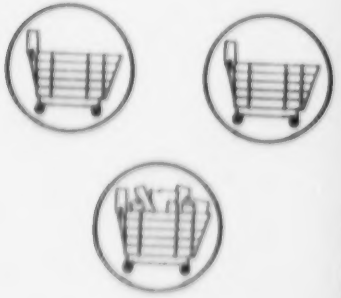
Supermarket Game

Fill in the missing numbers with 4, 5, 6 if your child can count that far. If not, repeat 1, 2, 3.



Nursery Rhyme Activities

Read and write together

Why?

Learning nursery rhymes can help children learn to read. Rhymes help them to notice the sounds in words. Ask your child to guess which word is coming next.

The tunes help them to remember. He will enjoy joining in and will soon learn the rhymes by heart. Then you can point to the words as you sing them together.

Make some mistakes on purpose:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a chair

Again Humpty couldn't put together

Humpty Dumpty had a great climb

Making a jigsaw can help him look at shapes carefully. This skill is important in learning to read.

Playing with puppets can help him to re-tell stories or sing the rhymes. Puppets are a very good way to develop his speech. You can join in too. Help him to explore new experiences and use new words. Make a doctor puppet, or a dentist... or a teacher...

What Next?

More ideas for making puppets

- Paper plate puppets – draw a face on the plate. Stick on some wool hair. Stick the plate to a lolly stick.
- Finger puppets from old gloves – cut the fingers off the glove. Or leave it whole and make a family of five puppets! Stitch mouth, eyes, nose. Maybe add some wool for hair.
- Puppets from toilet roll tubes. Stick on bits of cloth and wool or draw a face and clothes with felt pens.
- Sock puppets – old socks make good animal puppets.Try a snake or a dog. Stick on a paper tongue or paper ears.
- Wooden spoon puppets. Just draw a face onto the spoon. You can dress it up if you want to, in a paper bag tied round the neck.
- Paper bag or envelope puppets – just draw a face on the bag. Add strips of paper for hair. If you want to make an animal, screw up the corners for ears. (Paper bags make good masks too... Just cut two eyeholes.)

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Nursery Rhymes

Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall

All the king's horses and all the king's men

Couldn't put Humpty together again!

Making a Jigsaw and Finger Puppets

You will need

- Crayons or felt pens
- Scissors
- Cardboard from an old cereal box
- Glue or paste
- A big envelope

Making the jigsaw

1. Colour the picture.
2. Stick the picture on to the card.
3. When it is dry cut it into pieces.

   Ask her to put Humpty together again.
4. Keep the pieces in an envelope for another time.
5. When she can do the jigsaw quickly, you could cut it into smaller pieces to make it more difficult!

Making the finger puppet

1. Colour the picture.
2. Cut it out.
3. Stick the two ends of paper together so that it fits his finger.
4. Sing the rhyme together. He can do the actions.
5. Get him to help make a wall for Humpty to sit on. Use Lego or an empty cereal box.
6. Draw some faces on your finger nails and join in as all the king's men!

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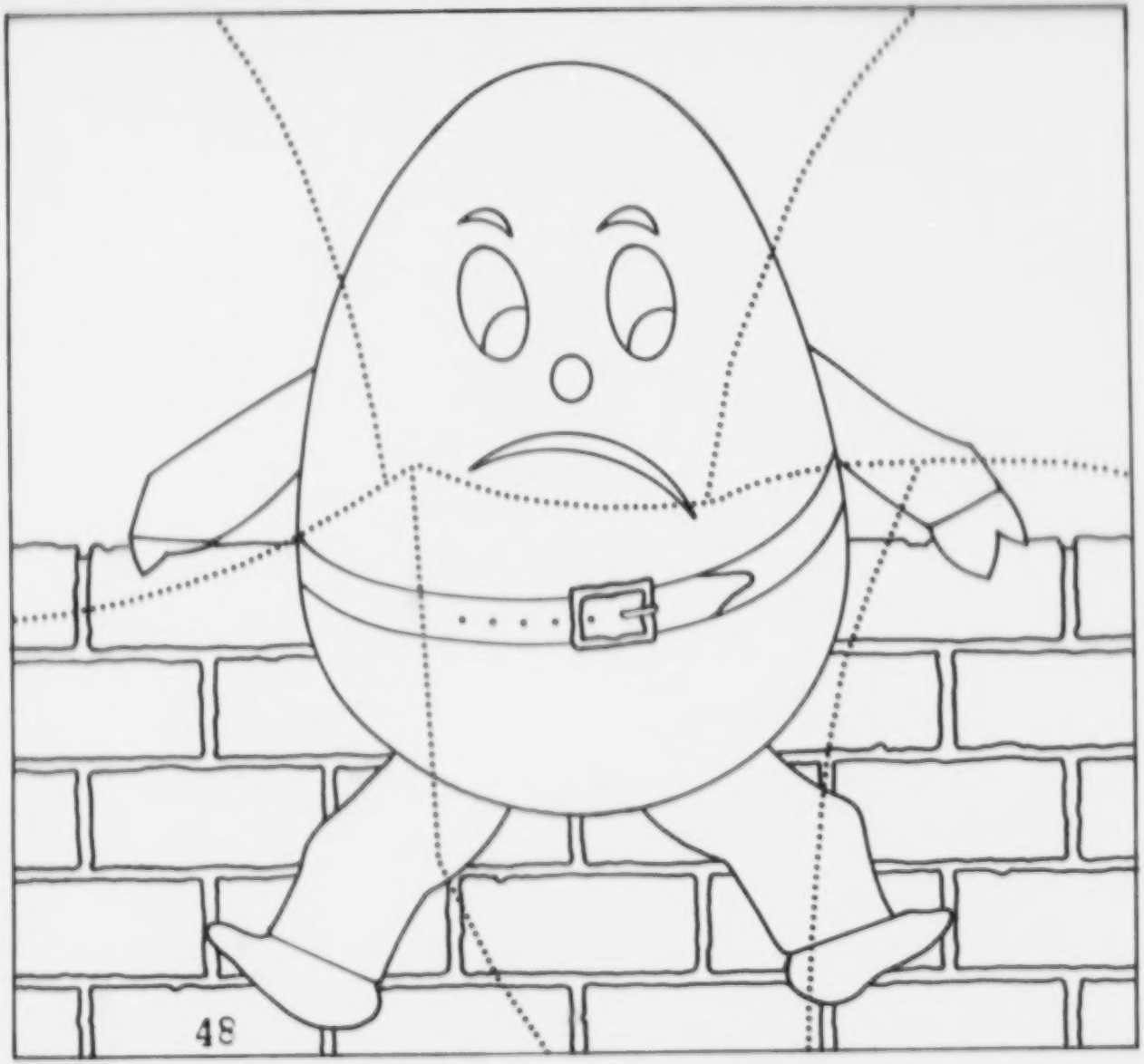

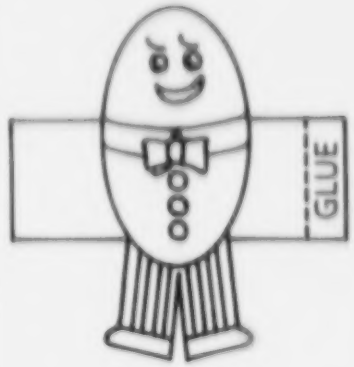

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How well do I know my child?

Fill in as much as you can. Then ask your child! See how much the answers change over the years . . .

Name	Favourite TV programme
Age	Two favourite foods
Favourite toy	Two biggest hates
Favourite book or story	Favourite form of comfort
Favourite game	Favourite clothes
Favourite nursery rhyme or song	Favourite place

Writing and play

'Pretend' play can give your child lots of chances to write.

You don't need a play house.

- **A clothes horse makes a perfect frame for a shop or house.**
- **Make a shop out of chairs covered with a blanket or sheet.**
- **Use the space under the table, or put the table on its side. Put a sheet over it.**
- **Have a box of old hats, scarves, shoes, clothes for dressing up.**

Shops

Use empty food packets and unopened tins. Stick price labels on. Paper and pencil for 'pretend' shopping lists. Paper money, or milk bottle tops.

Post Office or Bank

Use old post cards and envelopes, and used stamps. Get some blank forms from the real post office or bank. Cut a slit in a cereal box for posting letters, or use a tissue box with a hole in the top. A cork dipped in paint could be the stamper.

Hospital or Doctor's Surgery or a Vet's

A note pad for the doctor, some little bottles and boxes for medicine etc. Notices for the wall – you could probably get some old ones from the real surgery. Make some little appointment cards. Old diary for appointment book. Label some boxes "Plasters", "Bandages" and make these out of paper.

Cafe

A menu card, and note pad for the orders.

Travel Agent

Collect some holiday brochures from the real travel agents. Notepads, pretend phone.

Zoo

Put toy animals in cages made out of cereal packets. Make labels for the cages. Tickets, paper money, chair as a pretend turnstile.

School

Blackboard, register, little writing books etc.

Join in with your child but don't tell him what to do . . . it's his game!

Read and write together

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Making Books

Why?

Making books together will help your child to know that reading is part of every day life.

Making books can help her to understand how they work – which way up they are, what they say on the cover, how the pages go from left to right, how the words go from top to bottom.

Making books out of pictures or photos which mean something special will help her to know that books are fun.

Making books will help her to recognise some words by sight. Making alphabet books will help her to remember sounds.

What Next?

More ideas for making books.

- Save old post cards. Use the pictures for sorting and talking about together. Which ones do you like best? And then your child could stick them into a scrapbook.
- Ask your local wallpaper shop for an old book of samples. You can use the papers for book covers. Some of the embossed ones can be used to make rubbings. Cover the page with a piece of paper and show him how to scribble over it with a wax crayon.
- Make some shape books. Try a book in the shape of a house. Help him to think of the names of different rooms. Write the names on separate pages. Stick furniture catalogue pictures on the right page.

Read and write together

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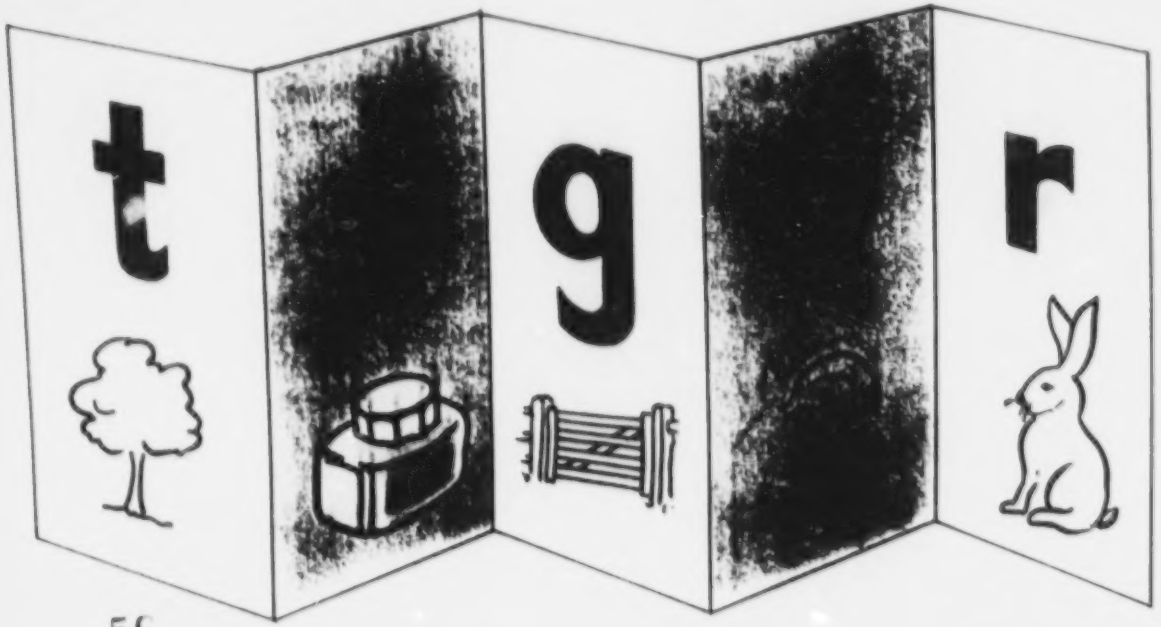
Make a zig zag book. Just fold a strip of paper first one way and then the other until you get to the end. He could draw pictures to tell a simple story - maybe the story of a seed growing into a flower... or the story of Little Red Riding Hood. Or make your child's name book with a letter on each page. She could draw something beginning with each letter.



My Family Book

You will need:

- 3 sheets of plain white or coloured paper
- Some old gift wrapping paper
- A stapler (OR hole-punch and ribbon or string, OR needle and thread)
- Crayons or felt pens.

1. Fold the sheets of paper in half.
2. Make a cover out of the wrapping paper.
3. Fix the pages together with staples, or punch holes in them and tie them together with a ribbon, or stitch them.
4. Let him draw a picture of everyone in the family, one on each page. You could add photos as well.
5. Talk about each person and write down his words under the drawing. Point to the words as you read them.
6. Let him 'read' the book to you.
7. Make another book and let him draw or do 'pretend' writing in it. Notice whether he knows where the first page is...which way up it goes...where to start 'writing'...

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Language (Reading) Record

Name:

Knows that books have authors and titles

Looks to the left of a double page

Enjoys and asks for stories.

Looks at and talks about pictures in books.

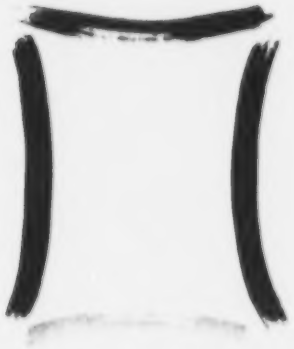
Selects books to look at without prompting

Can match labels or letters

Opens book right way up

Knows which is front of the book

Recognises own name in print



Uses words from stories in other play

Recognises first letter of own name when seen in other words

Notices some letters on labels or signs

Will guess what might happen next in a story

Turns pages one at a time

Watches adults reading, shows interest

Becomes involved with

Can 'read' own writing –

Joins in

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characters and happenings

self or adult

reading

Joins in rhymes, stories

Asks for a story

Understands what a word is and that words have spaces between them

Can retell a story

Enjoys and responds to rhyme and rhythm

Knows some parts of books by heart

Makes own books

Will guess the next word in a story

Looks at pictures when story is being read

Recognises some letter sounds

Makes comments (e.g. 'that's like mine') asks questions about story

Chooses to look at books alone or with a friend

Points to print and asks what it says

Points out words in a story she/he knows (e.g. Spot)

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Talking Skills Record

Name:

Chats freely to other children. Chats freely to adults

Talks about what she/he's doing, ideas

Talks about his/her feelings

Listens to others and answers questions

Listens to instructions, stories, rhymes, poems

Talks about past/ present/ future

Joins in stories, rhymes

Enjoys the sound of using new words and enjoys talking to self

Makes up nonsense words and rhymes

Strings words together to make sense

Can make up a rhyme, story, joke to tell

Is able to take a message

62

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Language (Writing) Record

Name:

Watches adults writing

Asks questions about writing

Can draw a person (example)

Plays with writing materials to make own messages says 'I'm writing'

Writes individual letters

Can write own name with help

Can write own name without help

Can 'read' to others to explain what own marks mean

Writes strings of letters sometimes in word-like clusters

Makes marks on paper using different tools (paint, crayons, chalk, brush, felt tips, etc)

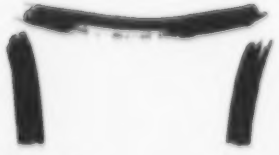
Writes letters from own name

Makes letter-like shapes

Knows the letter which begins own name

Joins in writing with

Knows the difference



Can use different writing surfaces

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e.g. making shopping list

drawing and writing

blackboard, card, wet sand, etc)

Makes a variety of writing patterns

Knows that letters stand for different sounds

Draws a simple human figure

Knows that there are spaces between words

Knows that letters can be repeated

Writes own labels for pictures and models

Behaves like a writer e.g. makes marks from left to right

Knows that writing 'means something'

Sits and holds pencil like a writer. Moves pencil across paper

Draws circles on paper

Makes up and down or side to side marks on paper

Makes marks from left to right

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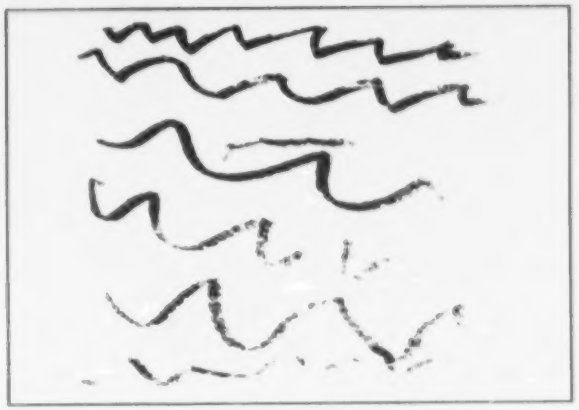
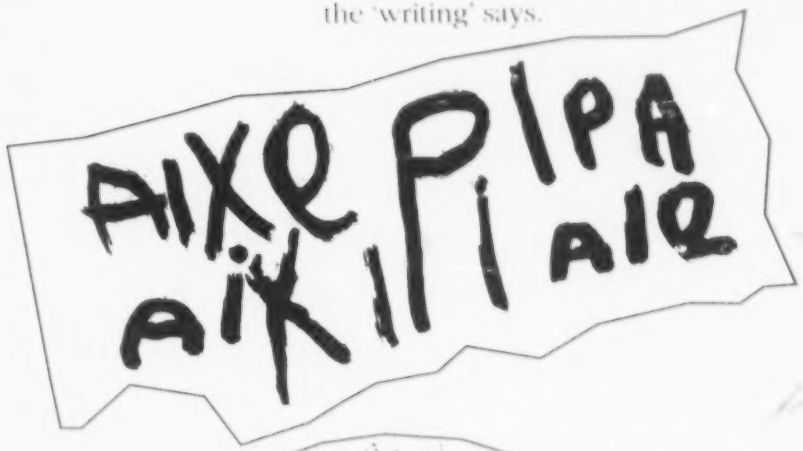
Learning to Write

Children know the difference between 'writing' and 'drawing' from a very early age.

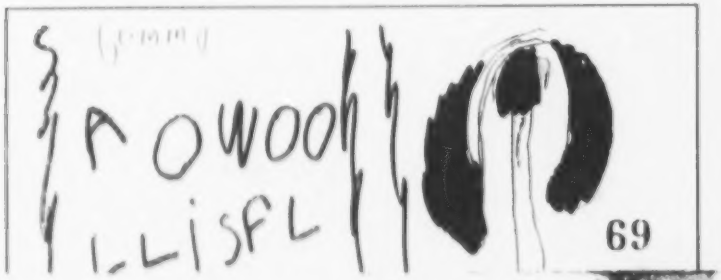
Your child's first marks may be scribbles, or circles, or lots of little marks.



Then you may see some shapes which look a bit like letters. This 'writing' is different from her drawing. The same shapes are often repeated, just like they are in 'real' writing. She may tell you what the 'writing' says.



Later on you will notice that some of the shapes are letters. Often the first letters are the ones in her name. Often they are capitals.



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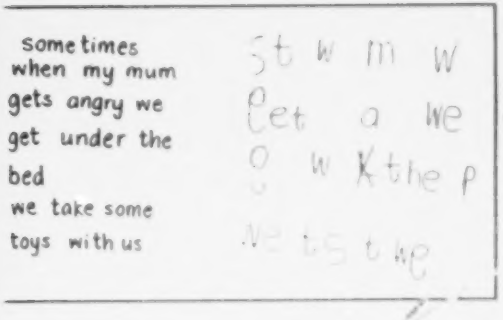
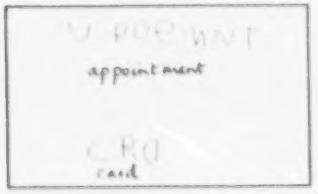
'real words' even though the sounds don't match. The writing may go from left to right in several lines.

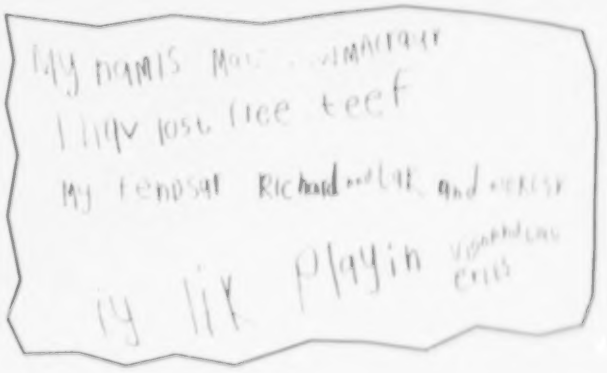


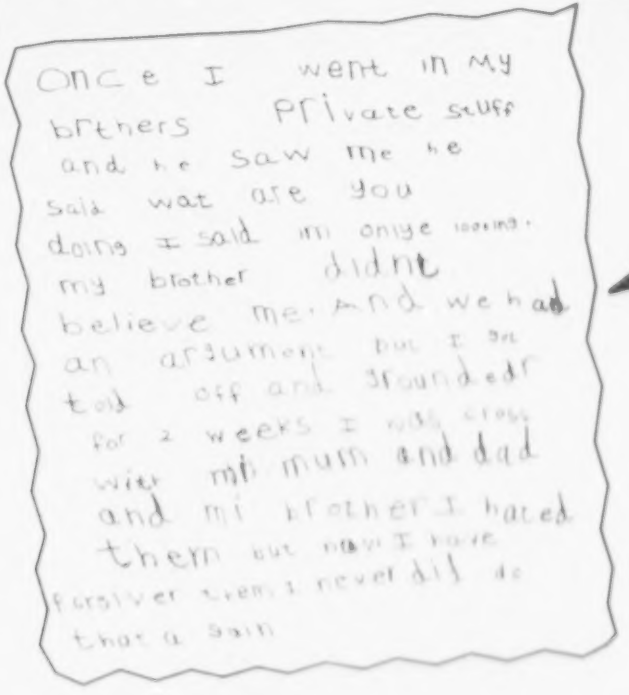
The next stage is when some of the letters make the first sound of the words she is trying to write.

Then more letters appear. Sometimes she will use the name of a letter to represent the sound (R for 'are').



Soon there will be some words which she spells from sight, as well as words spelled from sounds.




Once I went in my
brothers private stuff
and he saw me he
said wat are you
doing I said in onye looking.
my brother didnt
believe me. And we had
an argument but I ran
told off and grounded
for 2 weeks I was cross
wiv mi mum and dad
and mi brother I hated
them but now I love
forever even I never did do
that a sain

Bit by bit she will remember more spellings and the writing will be easier to read.

All this takes a long time.

Don't worry about spellings when your child is starting to write.

Just encourage her to keep going! . . .

Write back . . .

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Reading all around us

Signs and Symbols

Children start to read by looking at the shape of the word.

They will already know a lot of shapes from the signs and symbols all around us.

How many of these signs do you recognise?

Does your child know some of them?

Child watching

When you next go shopping notice which signs and symbols your child knows.

Point some out and talk about them – ask him to find things you want to buy when you're in the supermarket together.

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Read and write together

Alphabet scrapbook

You will need :

- crayons or felt pens
- card from an old cereal box
- scissors
- glue or paste
- a scrap book – bought or home made – with at least 13 pages (26 sides)
- some old magazines or catalogues or Christmas cards
- old newspapers.

1. Let your child colour the letters.

2. Cut them out and stick one on each side of the page, or one on each page if the scrap book is big enough.

3. Let her look for pictures of different objects and cut them out.

4. Help her to decide what the name of each object is.

5. Help her to make the beginning sound of each name.

6. Help your child to find the right page in the scrap book and stick the picture in.

7. Let him watch you write the names under the pictures. Can he point to the letters which are the same?

8. He could look in magazines and newspapers for different letter shapes and stick them on the right page too.

Try making a Zig-Zag Book

(See the sheet about making books).You could make a very long one for the whole alphabet, or small ones for different letters. Then he can draw little pictures for each letter.

Read and write together

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Your Alphabet

Colour in the alphabet

Cut out the letter cards and keep them

A	a	B	b	C	c
D	d	E	e	F	f
G	g	H	h	I	i
J	j	K	k	L	l

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M	m	N	n	O	o
P	p	Q	q	R	r
S	s	T	t	U	u
V	v	W	w	X	x
Y	y	Z	z		

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Alphabet Activities

Read and write together

Why?

Learning the names and sounds of the letters of the alphabet will help your child to read and write.

Playing alphabet games will help him to understand that words are made out of letters and that each letter has a name.

Listening to the beginning sounds of words and matching them to the letter shapes will help him to understand that sounds can be translated into print.

Knowing the sounds of letters *(phonics)* can help him to guess a new word in a reading book. It will also help him to guess how to spell a word.

Playing with the different letter shapes and making words will help him to remember what they look like. It will help him to develop some 'sight words'.

His name is the most important word in the world!

Looking at lots of styles of print will help him to recognise the letters even when they're not exactly the same.

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What next? – some more alphabet ideas . . .

- Make the letters of your child's name out of dough or plasticine. Let her copy them. Write them in sand, or chalk them on a blackboard or on paving stones outside.

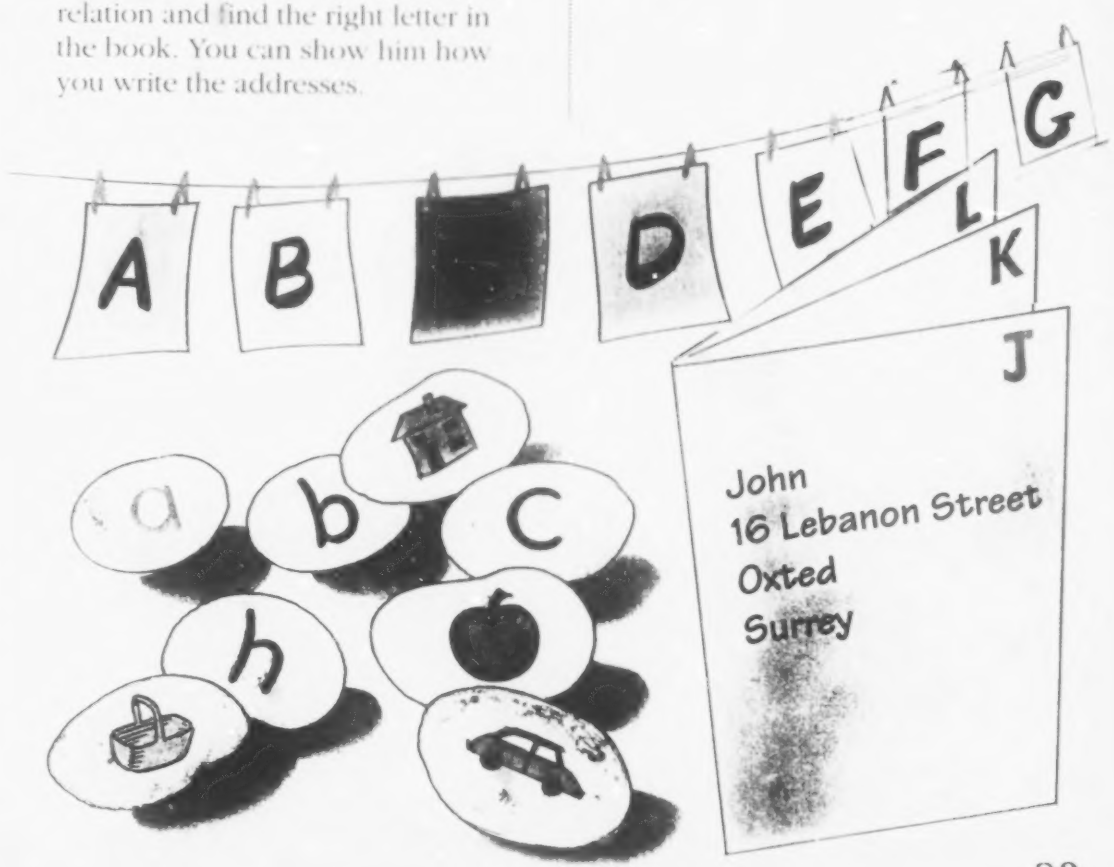
- Make an alphabet washing line. Peg each letter on a piece of string. Tie the string to two chairs. She can find pictures beginning with each letter and peg them in the right place.

- Collect 26 empty yogurt cartons. Stick a letter on each pot. She can find little objects or pictures beginning with different letters and put them in the right pot.

- Collect some smooth pebbles of about the same size. Draw or paint a letter on half the pebbles, and on the others draw or paint a little picture of something beginning with each of the letters. She will enjoy sorting the pebbles and matching the letters and pictures.

- Make an address book out of a little notebook. Let him watch you drawing each letter on a separate page. Start by putting in your own name and address. Let him help you to think of the name of a friend or relation and find the right letter in the book. You can show him how you write the addresses.

- Play "I Spy something beginning with . . ." or "I went shopping and I bought . . . (Apple, Banana, Crayons . . .)"



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What Happens Next?

Read and write together

Sequencing activities

Why?

Getting things in the right order is an important part of reading. This activity will help your child to understand that stories have a beginning, a middle and an end.

Talking about what is happening in each picture will help her to tell a story. Later on this will help her to write stories.

Looking carefully at pictures can help her to find clues in reading a story.

Using pictures can help her to remember what happens next in a story.

What next? Other ideas for using pictures

- Take some photographs of your child at different times of day. Use them to make a simple story book. Talk about which order to put them in.
- Cut out some pictures of children's clothes from an old mail order catalogue. Use them to make a story about a child getting dressed. Ask him to help put the pictures in the right order. ("Is it shoes or trousers first?")
- Cut up an old picture book. Use one with only a few pages. Ask him to help you put the pages in the right order.
- Tell him a fairy story – try Little Red Riding Hood, or Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Don't use a book. As you tell the story, draw pictures to show what is happening. Don't worry if you aren't an artist. At the end of the story, cut up the pictures. Keep them in an envelope. He can use them to tell the story again.
- Make a simple recipe book with him. Choose a favourite meal. Draw some pictures with him to show each stage. Let him try and put the pictures in the right order before sticking them in the book. Then ask him what you should write under each picture.

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What Happens Next?

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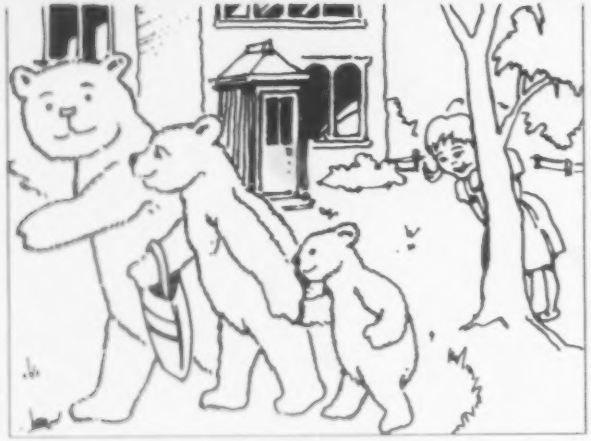

You will need:

- 7 sheets of A4 paper
- Scissors
- Glue or paste
- Stapler or needle and thread
- Crayons or felt pens

1. Show the pictures to your child.
2. Talk about the pictures together.
3. See if she can cut up the pictures.
4. Ask her to put them in the right order and tell the story.
5. Then ask her to stick each picture on a separate piece of paper.
6. Get her to tell you the story again. Write down her exact words under each picture.
7. Use another piece of paper for the cover. She can choose a title and draw a picture for the cover, and maybe colour the other pictures too.
8. Write the title and her name on the cover .
9. Fix the pages together. (Staple, stitch or stick)
10. Finally, read the book together.

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Treasure Hunts and Collections

Read and write together

Why?

All children like to collect things, to sort them and name them. Making collections will help your child to match names and things. Making labels will help her to match words with the objects. She will see that someone else can read the labels to find things out.

Reading clues for a treasure hunt is reading for a purpose. Using the same words in different ways will help her to remember them.

What Next?

There are all kinds of collections for displays:

- pebbles and shells
- food or sweet wrappers
- stamps, tickets, badges
- toys, clothes.

If there is a local museum anywhere near you, it might have collections of toys, or stuffed birds, or something else of interest. Point out the labels. But don't expect her to concentrate for a long time on just looking.

Hunt the Sweet: Write a set of cards with simple clues on: "On the TV" "By the fridge" "Under the table" "In the cupboard". Draw little pictures on each one to help him 'read' the cards. Start with just one card. As he gets the hang of the game, add more to make a longer hunt (each card can lead to another one, and the last one leads to the present).

Let him make up his own treasure hunt and put the cards round the room for you.

A Bear Hunt: Read "Going on a Bear Hunt" by Michael Rosen. Then act it out – over, under, through! You could write these words on cards for her to follow.

Action Cards: Another idea following on from the bear hunt. Make some cards saying "Stand up" "Clap your hands" "Sit down" "Jump" etc. Draw pictures of the action on each card. Take turns to take a card and do the action. Play this like musical chairs – when the music stops, take a card.

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Treasure Hunt Collections

You will need to take out:

- a plastic bag to collect things in
- wax crayon and thin paper for rubbings.

When you get back:

- a big piece of paper or a cloth for the display
- small pieces of folded card for labels
- felt pen.

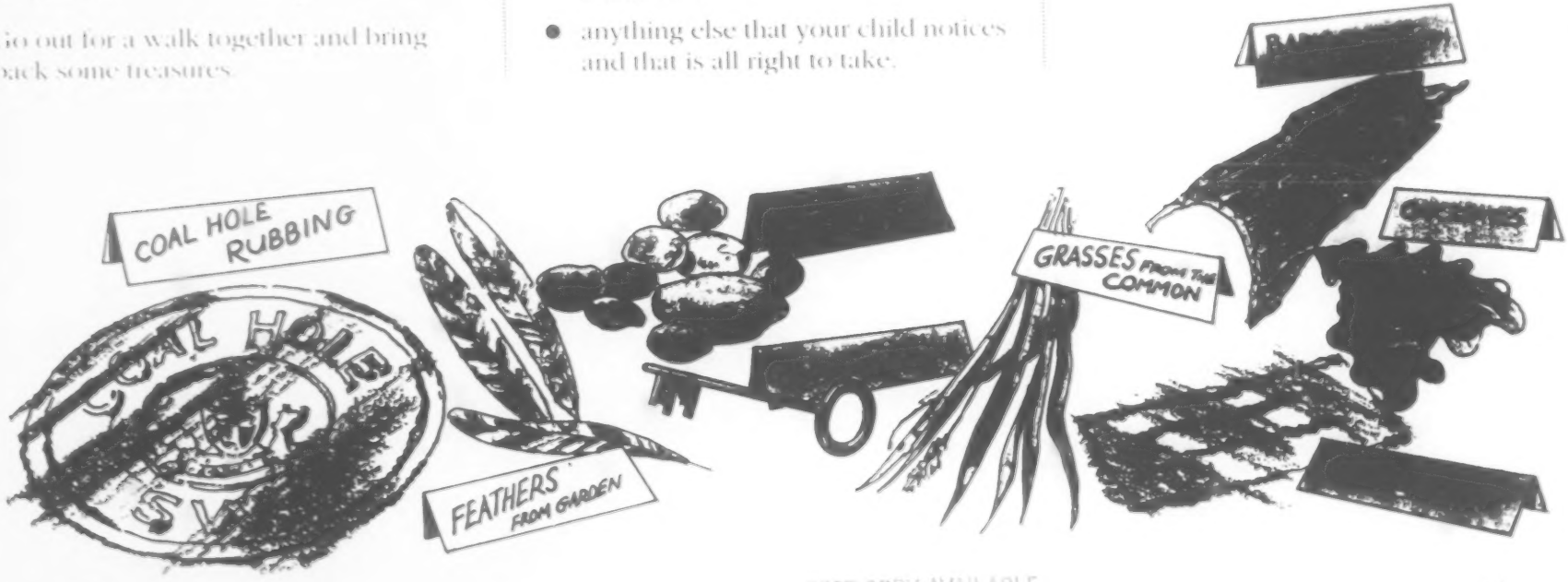
Go out for a walk together and bring back some treasures.

You might find :

- twigs
- leaves
- grasses
- feathers
- small pebbles
- brick rubbings
- tree bark rubbings
- coal hole rubbings
  (old coal holes on town pavements often have lovely patterns and names on)
- anything else that your child notices and that is all right to take.

When you return home, let him set out the things you have found. Make labels for them. Fold the card so that the label will stand up. You could also write where the things were found. Help him to put the labels by the different things. Invite a friend to look at the display.

You can play this as a game. Give your child a list of a few things that are easy to find in a park or a garden. Draw the object next to its name. See how long it takes her to find everything that is on the list.



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Handwriting Patterns

Read and write together

Why?

Drawing patterns helps your child to control a pencil.

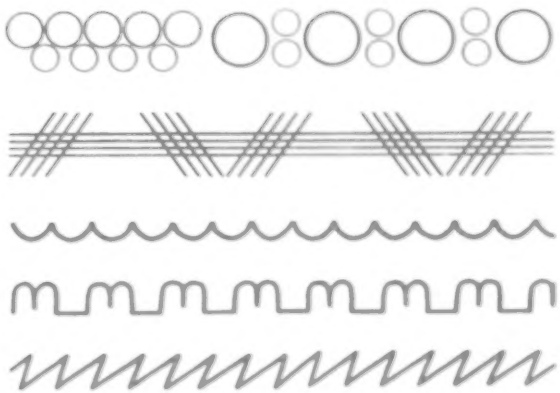
Use patterns which are based on letter shapes:

- circles
- lines
- hooks
- arches
- zigzags

This will help him to form letters later on.

Don't expect him to be able to copy your pattern exactly. He may just scribble at first.

Joining lines from left to right will help him get used to reading and writing from left to right.



What Next?

- You can buy handwriting practice books from most supermarkets or stationers. But don't spend lots of money on them. She will enjoy your own drawings much more. You can tell her stories about them as you draw, and make them 'just for her'.
- Show him how to make a pattern border round pictures to make a frame.
- Use an old paint brush and a bucket of water to do handwriting patterns outside on paving stones or on a wall.
- Use big felt pens on scrap paper. Use the patterns for covers when you make books together.
- Let her make a pattern for you to copy.
- Play 'joining up' games. Draw a dog on the left of the paper and a bone on the right. Ask her to draw a line to join them up.

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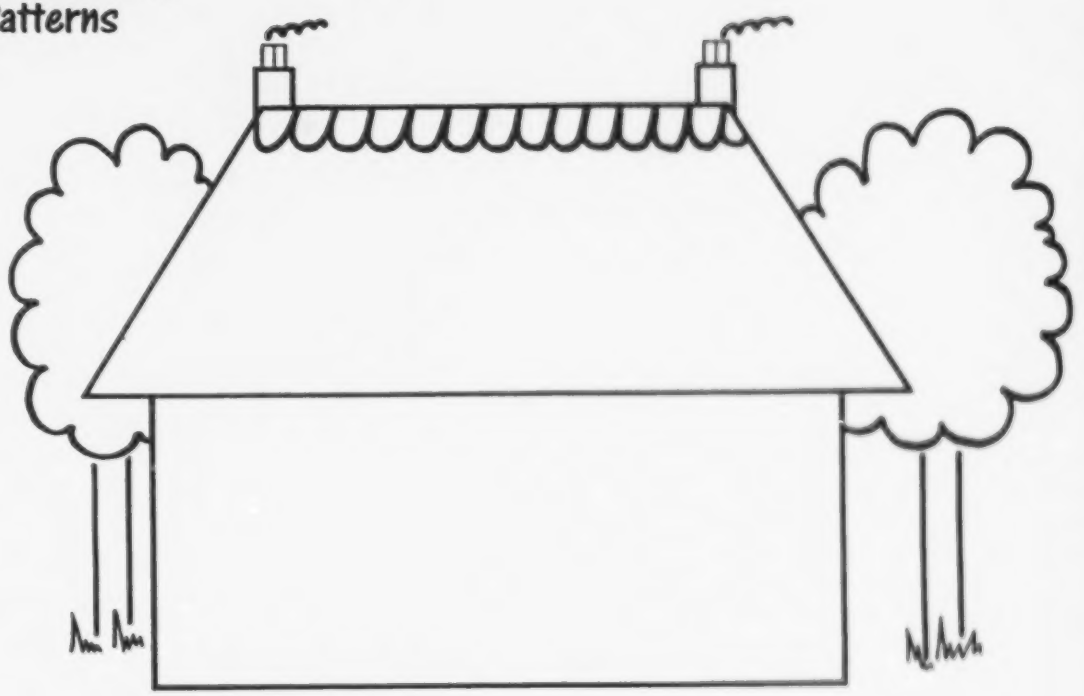
- Mazes : draw some people at the left of the page and some houses on the right. Join them up with wiggly lines which cross over each other. Ask him to trace the lines to find out who lives in which house.

- "Take a line for a walk". Draw some squiggles and lines across a large sheet of paper and let her trace over them with another colour. As you draw the lines, make up a story about going for a walk "round the corner...over the bridge.... across the field...." See if your child can remember the story as she draws.

Can your child draw the door and windows, and an apple on the tree?

Draw your own . . . pattern on a jersey, scales on a fish.

Handwriting Patterns



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Next Steps

Read and write together 98

Some Suggestions

Children's Book Clubs

There are now a lot of mail order book clubs that offer lots of books. A few are listed below. You should ask them to send you their catalogues or lists. You can then choose the club that has the best selection of books, and the best prices.

Children's Book of the Month Club, Guild House, Farnsby Street, Swindon SN99 9XX. Tel: 01793 512666.

Grolier Ltd., (among the other titles, they offer sets of Disney and Dr Seuss), PO Box 49, Norwich NR5 9PP. Tel: 01603 740740.

Humpty Dumpty Club, Odhams Leisure Group Ltd, 5 Guardian Road, Norwich NR5 8PD.

Letterbox Library, 436 Essex Road, London N1.
Tel: 0171 226 1633.

Red House, Cotswold Business Park, Witney OX8 5YF.
Tel: 01993 774171.

Public Libraries

Your local library will have a children's section. It may run free story times and holiday activities.

Useful books about young children's learning

Teaching Your Child, Volume 1: Language (1993), Parental Education Publishers, 400 Upper Richmond Road, West London SW14 7JX.

Creative Play, by Dorothy Einon, Penguin Books 1986. Hundreds of ideas for play and games from birth to ten years.

Entertaining and Educating Babies and Toddlers, by Robyn Gee and Susan Meredith.
Entertaining and Educating Young Children, by Robyn Gee. Usborne Parents' Guides.

Helping Your Child to Read and Write, BBC Publications.

Ready To Read, (three packs). Macdonald, 345 pre school publications: Mail Order from 345 Direct Mail, Purneil & Sons Ltd, Paulton, Avon.

Most supermarkets sell early learning books of activities for children. You could buy one and use it to give you ideas for making games yourself.

Getting Ready to Read and Write (age 3 – 4)

Learning to Write (age 4 – 6)

The Parent and Child Programme, Octopus Publishing Group 59 Grosvenor St, London W1.

Sainsbury's Home Learning

Ladybird Learning at Home series, and many others.

Early picture books for your child. You could borrow these from the public library.

Dick Bruna books, Methuen.

Picture Puffins (try 'The Bad Tempered Ladybird' or 'The Hungry Caterpillar' by Eric Carle).

Puffin

Picture Lions, (try 'Noisy Nora' by Rosemary Wells) Collins.
Meg and Mog, Heinemann.

First Time Stories, Nelson.

Elmer the Elephant stories, by David McKee. Red Fox Picture Books.

Frances Stories by Russell Hoban. Hippo books.

Fox in Socks (and many others good for phonics) by Dr Seuss Collins.

Nursery Rhyme and Action Rhyme collections

This Little Puffin

Puffin Book of Nursery Rhymes

Everyday Singaway, Piccolo Books.

Shops

(If you can't afford to buy, just use the ideas to make things yourself)

Early Learning Centre. Most big towns have a branch. Educational toys, books, and things to make and do. There is generally a play area for your child in the shop.

Mothercare. Most branches sell books and games.

Galt Toysbops, Send for their free colour catalogue – use pictures for cutting out.

Play and Learn from Galt, Dept M1, Freepost, PO Box 77, Burton Upon Trent, DE 14 1BR.

Book Lists

Available from Young Book Trust, The Book Trust, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2QZ.

99

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Chris Buckton,
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This pack was first produced by the ALBSU (now the Basic Skills Agency) in February 1995 as part of a promotion campaign on family literacy with the BBC. Over 300,000 people phoned for a copy, which was the largest ever response to a promotion about education on TV, and showed how keen parents are to help their children with reading and writing. *Read and Write Together* was reprinted several times during February and March 1995. The Agency has published this slightly revised version, in response to the continuing demand for copies.

March 1996

Read and write together

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The Basic Skills Agency
Commonwealth House, 1-19 New Oxford Street
London WC1A 1NU
Tel: 0171 405 4017 Fax: 0171 831 5038

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The Basic Skills Agency

BBC EDUCATION

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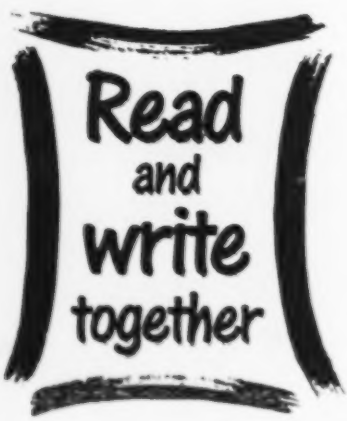
We hope that you enjoy using the 'Read and write together' pack. We would like to hear from parents and children who have used it. Please complete this form and return it to us.



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Commonwealth House,
1-19 New Oxford St, London WC1A 1NU.
Tel: 0171-405 4017. Fax: 0171-404 5038

Enjoy reading and writing with your children

- Remember – you are your child's first teacher
- Let them see you reading and writing often – they'll copy
- It's never too soon to start – babies and teddlers love picture and pop up books
- Praise them when they work out which way up? Where does it start?...
- Read together – little and often – when you are both in the mood
- Let them choose the books
- Talk about the cover and pictures: what will happen next?
- Make lots of opportunities to draw, scribble, do 'pretend writing'
- Point out words and letters – on the bus, in the supermarket, on TV
- Talking and telling stories helps children learn
- Help children get the library habit.